

Public Engagement for Transportation Projects

#13



Tools to Transform – Public
Engagement with Equity and
Inclusion for Local Governments

Introduction

Public engagement is a key part of developing and implementing a successful transportation project. Gathering the needs and concerns of the residents will help shape the development of the transportation project with the best outcome. Just as the project is successful with thoughtful planning, the public engagement process should also be planned to be equitable and inclusive.

How to Plan Public Engagement

1. What should local governments consider when organizing a planning process or project for inclusion, diversity, and equity?

Local governments around the world are developing better strategies to engage communities. When tailoring transportation projects to be inclusionary and equitable, consider the following to ensure the public process is integral, ethical, and effective:

- Place of residence – urban, suburban, rural;
- Geographic representation;
- Available means of transportation;
- Ability to connect and participate;
- Education and occupation;
- Political and cultural affiliations and gender inclusivity;
- Language proficiency and literacy; and
- Financial accessibility (If there are barriers or limitations, try to address in the process).

2. What are the guidelines to successfully engage citizens in transportation projects and plans?

1. Identify and be transparent about the reason or goal for engaging the local officials, community, and citizens.
2. Develop and share a clear purpose for engagement with participants.
3. Select the right public participation tool and determine if it should be in-person or on-line.
4. Determine if an internal or external facilitator is needed and the advantages and disadvantages to each.
5. Plan an effective meeting agenda.

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3. Why are we and what is the goal for engaging the public and local officials for this transportation project?

There are different types and levels of public engagement.

- To inform (handout/fact sheet/website/social media);
 - How will it be distributed? Through the mail, email, or social media? Do you need all types of communication to best reach everyone?
 - How do you inform people about the website, webpage, or social media?
- To consult (opportunity for comment);
 - How will citizens be able to comment? Will everyone have the opportunity to provide feedback with the methods selects?
- To involve (conduct a workshop or collaborative meetings with stakeholders);
 - Where will the workshop be held? At the municipal building or close to the area of the project being discussed. Will people be able to attend at the time selected? Will more people be able to participate if it is an interactive virtual meeting or drop-in?
- To collaborate (participatory committee); and
 - Who will be selected for the committee? Are all groups represented?
- To empower (decision-making commissions or committees).
 - Will all the groups have the opportunity to be represented?

Public participation and engagement “tools” to communicate and coordinate with the citizens:

- Media announcements
- Websites
- Social media pages/ crowdsourcing
- Email updates
- Toolkits for local community leaders
- Mailed information
- Surveys
- Virtual interactive drop-in sessions
- Community polling
- Public meetings and collaborative meetings with stakeholders
- Focus groups



Advantages to a thorough and inclusive public engagement process:

- Arrive at decisions that reflect public and stakeholder values, ideas, and address current issues.
- Achieve better results with responsible governance through an inclusive public process.
- Gain political buy-in and consensus-building to make informed decisions.
- Meet regulations and requirements for transportation projects, plans, and grants.

Resources:

Organizing Engagement, supported by the Nellie Mae Education Foundation, is an online publication dedicated to advancing knowledge, understanding, and practice of education organizing, engagement, and equity.

[Announcing Organizing Engagement – Organizing Engagement](#)

University of Minnesota Extension – Public Engagement Strategies

[Public engagement strategies | UMN Extension](#)

DVRPC Public Participation Municipal Implementation Tool #022

<https://www.dvrpc.org/Products/MIT022>

PennDOT’s Public Participation Plan

<http://www.dot.state.pa.us/public/PubsForms/Publications/PUB%20823.pdf>